REPORT
Language Proficiency Reporting Survey
January 22, 1973

During parts of November and December 1972, and
January 1973 twenty desk chiefs and training officers
were interviewed to determine their needs for infor-
mation regarding the scores of language proficiency
tests (see appendix 1 for a complete list of names).
Each interview lasted from thirty to sixty minutes
and covered items on an outline which was previously
sent to each individual (appendix 2). Topics not on
25X1A the outline were also discussed. Two of the persons
interviewed ███████████████████ felt that the
questions on the outline were not relevant to their
situation. There are, therefore, only 18 responses
recorded for each section.

Results

I. The Language School presently reports proficiency
in the areas of reading (R), speaking (S) and
understanding (U).

a. Do you need information on all three skills?

yes: 14
S&U only: 2
R&U only: 1
R only: 1

Comments: Reading is less important for DDP, but
essential for OER and CRS.

b. Do you need information about other skills such
as pronunciation, writing, translation,
interpretation, etc.?

no: 6
pronunciation: 10
translation & interpretation: 2

Comments: Information on pronunciation is extremely
important. The present philosophy under-
lying the grading of oral tests is that
grammar and vocabulary are the most
important considerations; pronunciation
and fluency are of secondary importance.
It is, therefore, possible for a person

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to receive a 5 in speaking and still
have a detectable accent. Conversely,
it is possible for a person to receive
a 3 in speaking and yet sound like a
native speaker. This information should
be available.

c. Are there other kinds of information regarding
an individual's language ability (e.g. control
of scientific or political vocabulary) that you
need to know?

no: 14
intelligence, political, military vocabulary: 4
(It would be nice)

II. The levels of proficiency are reported on a scale
of 0-5. A plus may also be used for levels 0-4
when appropriate.

a. Do you feel that you have a clear understanding
of the definitions of these levels?

yes: 18

b. To what degree of accuracy is it important for
you to know the proficiency level of your
personnel? Is it sufficient to know that
someone is a 3, or is it important to know
that he is a 3+?

In favor of pluses: 12
Do not find pluses necessary: 6

c. It is often difficult to discriminate within
the 4-5 range. Is it sufficient for you to
know that someone is simply 4/5, or do you
have to know exactly?

Score 4/5 as one (for most cases): 15
Separate 4 4+ 5: 3

Comments: Most desks are happy to have someone
in the 3 range. Because a 3 is considered
sufficient for most operational purposes,
anything above is desirable but not
essential. If it is necessary to pass
someone off as a native a more precise
score is needed, but such cases are rare.
From a testing point of view, it is
difficult to measure the full range of
0-5 within the context of a single test.

It seems to make sense to assign a
single score for the three levels 4, 4+,
and 5, then give a special test to
determine the exact level only when
necessary.

III. When an individual has taken a language test, the
score is determined and the results are transmitted
to the training officer via a Form 1273 (Certification
of Language Proficiency), a memo, or in rare cases
by phone. In the case of the Form 1273 the infor-
mation is also recorded in the Language Qualifications
Register (LQR).

    a. Is the procedure outlined above satisfactory
for you purposes? What might be improved?

    Satisfactory: 18

  Comments: Often there is a need for more detailed
information, e.g. pronunciation.

    b. What use do you make of the information when
you receive it?

    This question turned out to be very weak.
The use depends on the original purpose of
the test. The information is often used as
input for a decision, i.e. assignment or
promotion; the results of the test are some-
times discussed with the examinee; in all
cases the 1273 is filed in the personnel
folder. My feeling is that most language
proficiency tests are routine, either EOD,
after language training or after returning
from PCS. In such cases the 1273 is probably
filed without any further action.

IV. The LQR was established to give managers a tool
to help in the assignment of personnel to
language-essential positions, to provide infor-
mation concerning language skills of applicants,
and to record the level of language ability for
the purpose of incentive awards.

    a. Do you have easy access to a copy of the LQR?

    yes: 16
    do not know: 2

  Comments: Most people did not recognize it by its
name (Language Qualifications Register),

in fact very few had a clear under-
standing of what it really is. It
became clear to me after several
interviews that some people were
confusing the LQR with the LCR
(Language Control Register).

b. How often do you use it?

often: 3
seldom: 11
never: 4

Comments: Several people indicated that they
do not trust the LQR--it is not
complete, accurate or up-to-date.

c. For what purposes do you use it?

for making assignments: 4
for promotions: 3
to find language assets: 13

d. Do you use any other methods for determining
an individual's language proficiency?

check personnel file: 10
speak with person (ask him about his ability,
and in some cases speak in the foreign
language): 15
ask others who know him: 5

V. Employees who claim proficiency are usually tested
by the Language School to verify the claim. In
addition, many individuals are re-tested after a
certain length of time, often after returning from
overseas assignments.

a. Are there individuals in your component who
have language proficiency but have not yet
been tested? If so, do you know why they
have not yet been tested?

yes: 6
do not think so: 7
do not know: 5

Reasons: Afraid they will receive a low score,
takes too much time, see no reason,
don't know they are supposed to.

Comments: It was obivous that most people simply
did not know the answer to this question.
Virtually no office has a watertight
method of re-testing personnel after
returning from overseas. It was also
obvious that many senior officers did
not want to be tested.

b. What do you feel is a reasonable amount of time
before re-testing?

This question was very weak. There are too
many variables involved to make a blanket
statement. But there was feeling that an
individual should be re-tested after two
or three years if the language has not been
used.

c. What mechanism do you have (if any) for
scheduling personnel returning from overseas
assignments to be tested?

have no mechanism: 9
check sheet: 7

Comment: None of the mechanisms described is by
any means satisfactory. Often it is
left to the individual to make his own
appointment with the Language School,
which he then neglects to do. In the
case where the secretary makes the
appointment, the individual can call
and cancel it without rescheduling
another one.

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Additional Comments by Persons Interviewed

1. Many people do not trust the Language School testing
   procedure, and want to make their own evaluation.
   They say that they know the people better, and know
   how they will operate as case officers. Apparently
   it is common practice to ask a person how his French/
   German/Spanish/ etc. is, and to make a decision on
   the basis of his own evaluation. Another concern
   is the use of regulations for language-essential
   positions. Some desks will downgrade all jobs, e.g.
   S to G, or G to nothing, in order to eliminate the
   constraint. They do want, of course, personnel who
   have high language ability, but they also want the
   freedom of making assignments on the basis of other
   considerations.

2. Many of the people who were interviewed were not aware
   of personnel who had claimed language proficiency and
   had not been tested, but were well aware that many
   of their people had not been tested recently, even
   though they had been overseas, or had not used the
   language for several years. There was mixed feeling
   about the need for making up the backlog of testing.
   Because some do not trust the LQR anyway, they did
   not have strong feelings about proficiency testing
   for the purpose of having an up-to-date record. There
   was also concern expressed about the time taken up
   by testing.

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3. ████ is concerned about the fact that contract employees
   are not recorded in the LQR. Most of their
   personnel are contract, and they would like to have
   accessible information about their language proficiency.

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4. ████████████████████ does not feel that the
   Language School is taking care of their needs. They
   want courses in reading and translation, but want them
   at the Key Bldg. They do most of their own language
   testing, and, in fact, have a number of people who
   are not listed in the LQR.

5. The feeling was expressed very strongly that the
   Language School is performing its function extremely
   well. There is great appreciation for the quality
   of instruction and the flexibility in dealing with
   special requirements. Unfortunately, most divisions
   cannot let their people go long enough for adequate
   training. They want qualified people, but they

cannot afford the price.

6. Some special wishes were expressed with regard to training, although it was usually admitted that they were wishes and perhaps not feasible. Among these were:
   a. Special training for secretaries in answering phones, writing notes, etc.
   b. Specialized vocabulary for certain functions.
   c. Training in auditory monitoring.
   d. A program for continued language training in the field.

7. Language training is extremely important, but sadly neglected in the Agency. Too many people do not have adequate proficiency in the language of the country in which they are working.

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Appendix 2
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REPORTING SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to determine the effectiveness
of the present language testing program in reporting
meaningful information to the consumer.

I.   The Language School presently reports proficiency
     in the areas of reading (R), speaking (S) and
     understanding (U).
     a.   Do you need information on all three skills?
     b.   Do you need information about other skills such
          as pronunciation, writing, translation, inter-
          pretation, etc.?
     c.   Are there other kinds of information regarding
          an individual's language ability (e.g., control
          of scientific or political vocabulary) that you
          need to know?

II. The levels of proficiency are reported on a scale
     of 0-5. A plus may also be used for levels 0-4
     when appropriate.
     a.   Do you feel that you have a clear understanding
          of the definitions of these levels? (See
          attached sheet.)
     b.   To what degree of accuracy is it important for
          you to know the proficiency level of your
          personnel? Is it sufficient to know that some-
          one is a 3, or is it important to know that he
          is a 3+?
     c.   It is often difficult to discriminate within
          the 4-5 range. Is it sufficient for you to
          know that someone is simply 4/5, or do you have
          to know exactly?

III. When an individual has taken a language test, the score
     is determined and the results are transmitted to the
     training officer via a Form 1273 (Certification of
     Language Proficiency), a memo, or in rare cases by
     phone. In the case of the Form 1273 the information
     is also recorded in the Language Qualifications
     Register (LQR).
     a.   Is the procedure outlined above satisfactory for
          your purposes? What might be improved?
     b.   What use do you make of the information when
          you receive it?

IV. The LQR was established to give managers a tool to help in the assignment of personnel to language-essential positions, to provide information concerning language skills of applicants, and to record the level of language ability for the purpose of incentive awards.
   a. Do you have easy access to a copy of the LQR?
   b. How often do you use it?
   c. For what purposes do you use it?
   d. Do you use any other methods for determining an individual's language proficiency?

V. Employees who claim proficiency are usually tested by the Language School to verify the claim. In addition, many individuals are re-tested after a certain length of time, often after returning from overseas assignments.
   a. Are there individuals in your component who have language proficiency but have not yet been tested? If so, do you know why they have not been tested?
   b. What do you feel is a reasonable amount of time before re-testing?
   c. What mechanism do you have (if any) for scheduling personnel returning from overseas assignments to be tested?

VI. We would welcome any comments you might have concerning our present system of language proficiency testing. If you have been tested personally, you might give us your reaction. If you have heard comments from other people, we would be interested in knowing their comments.

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Evaluation of Language Testing Program

FROM:	EXTENSION	NO.
C/LS 426 C of C	3065	DTR-0000
		DATE 21 February 1973

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)	DATE RECEIVED	DATE FORWARDED	OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)
1. DD/TR — DTR (Info)			in/	1. A few months ago I asked ▮▮▮▮▮▮ to conduct a consumer survey on our language proficiency test program (attached). This was done by having him contact about 20 people in either a Branch Chief or Training Officer capacity in different parts of the Agency. In addition to remarks on proficiency testing a number of the respondents made comments about language training. The results are interesting and I thought you might like to see the report.

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Chief, Language School |
2. C/LS 426 C of C 25X1A				
3.				
4. MARcella				
5.				
6.				Tom - Very interesting indeed - but what are we going to do about the findings. - Should we discuss these in LDC? - Think over these one + get back to me. ATC

/ to 4 : See me . |
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				